

safer, but we should be resolved to make it the safest big country in the world.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:05 p.m. in Presidential Hall in the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred

to former White House Press Secretary James S. Brady, who was wounded in the 1981 assassination attempt on President Ronald Reagan, and his wife, Sarah, chair, Hand Gun Control, Inc.; former Secretaries of the Treasury Robert E. Rubin and Lloyd Bentsen; and Hillary Clinton's brother, attorney Hugh Rodham.

Statement on the Death of Robert G. Damus

November 30, 2000

I am deeply saddened by the sudden passing of Bob Damus, General Counsel for the Office of Management and Budget. Bob made invaluable contributions to the common good in his 20 years of Government service, embodying the very finest qualities of our Nation's career civil servants.

Bob's fine intellect and the breadth of his knowledge were respected throughout Government and beyond. This administration and the American people benefited greatly from his keen judgment and wise counsel, and he served my

two predecessors with the same loyalty, dedication, and commitment to excellence.

With a distinguished academic background, Bob chose Government service out of a deep desire to contribute to the public good. In recognition of his outstanding service, he twice received the Presidential Rank Award as a Distinguished Executive, the highest honor for career civil servants in the Senior Executive Service.

Bob's probity and integrity were unsurpassed. He was a supremely decent man, and his memory will serve as an inspiration to us all.

Remarks at the G&P Foundation Angel Ball 2000 in New York City

November 30, 2000

Well, first of all, thank you, Denise, for the saxophone. I'll have a little more time to play it in a week or two. [*Laughter*] And thank you for the wonderful gift. But let me say to all of you, I think that we should be here honoring Denise for remembering her daughter in such a magnificent way.

And I also want to thank Philip for all that you have done to make this evening possible. And I want to thank the other honorees tonight, for the power of their examples. Michael Jackson, who has been so kind to us, thank you for the wonderful thing you said, and Sir Paul McCartney. I don't know, I got the saxophone at an event which honored two of the greatest musical geniuses of the 20th century. I don't know what that says. [*Laughter*]

And I would like to thank Her Majesty Queen Noor, who has been a wonderful friend to Hillary and to me and I think is one of the truly

great citizens of the world alive today. I thank her.

And thank you, Larry King, for being here. I forgive you for using this occasion to hit me up for our exit interview. [*Laughter*] I am not a very good story. You should be down in Florida doing interviews tonight. [*Laughter*]

Let me say to all of you, I want to just echo a thing or two Hillary said. I love this event. I had a wonderful time 2 years ago. I've had a terrific time tonight. But I look forward to the time when we will be forced to find another reason to meet, because the war on cancer will have been won. Like all of you, I am tired of burying my family members and friends from diseases that it seems that we ought to be able to find a way to cure or even to prevent. It won't be long now, and when that happy day comes, all of you can take pride in knowing that you did something to hasten the moment.

I can tell you that we're already making impressive progress. Earlier this year we learned that for the very first time, cancer deaths in the United States are on the decline. Researchers are now unlocking the secrets of the human genome; revolutionary new treatments are sure to follow. There are now medicines being tested now, not only to cure but to actually prevent various kinds of cancers.

Now, we actually know that the average human body is built to last more than 100 years. And the younger women in this audience who are still having children, in your childbearing years you will be having babies with a life expectancy of 90 years or more, because of the medical research that is now going on.

But it's important for the rest of us to do our part. And our administration, with Hillary and the Vice President in the lead, has worked hard. We've doubled research over the last 8 years. We have speeded the approval process for cancer drugs. We've involved more and more Medicare patients in cancer screenings and test trials. And we've extended coverage to uninsured women with breast and cervical cancer. But there's a lot more to do.

What I want you to understand is that all of us, and mostly you—I have been on the public payroll for some years—but those of us that are fortunate enough to have some income are always given all these opportunities to make charitable donations, and you always hope that the money you give will have some beneficial impact. But what I want you to understand is that the sequencing this year of the human genome is a truly seminal event in the entire history of science.

We have already identified, scientists have, the problems in the gene structure that lead women to be much more vulnerable to breast cancer. And it is just the beginning. There has

never been a better time to invest money in cancer research, ever. And it is highly likely, even though none of us can know when the next discoveries are coming or which scientists will make them, it is highly likely that the money you invest in this project will actually directly lead to the dramatic acceleration of cures for cancer, preventions for cancer, and the saving of other children's lives.

And so again I say, thank you, Denise. Thank you for everything you have done to make it possible for Hillary and me to serve. Thank you to those of you who have been so good to my wife. And thank you, Senator Schumer, for showing up. They will be a great team, and I'm very, very grateful for that. And as I leave office, let me say to all of you—I thank Michael Jackson for what he said—this has been the greatest honor imaginable for me to serve.

But the thing that really matters about this country is not who the President is; it's what kind of people we are. The thing about any free society is that it's the citizens who matter, the decisions they make, the work they do, the dreams they dream. There has never been a better time to dream of curing every kind of cancer or to give.

So, even though I won't be President next year, I hope you'll be here, giving next year, because it will really make a difference.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:30 p.m. in the Broadway Ballroom at the New York Marriot Marquis Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Denise Rich, cofounder, G&P Foundation, and her son-in-law, Philip Aouad; musicians Michael Jackson and Paul McCartney; Queen Noor of Jordan; and CNN talk show host Larry King, who served as master of ceremonies.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting an Alternative Plan for Federal Employee Locality-Based Comparability Payments

November 30, 2000

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

I am transmitting an alternative plan for Federal employee locality-based comparability payments (locality pay) for 2001.

Federal employees are the key to effective Government performance. During the last 8 years, the number of Federal employees has declined while their responsibilities have stayed